DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 308 561 CS 506 707

AUTHOR Lee, Hye-ryeon
TITLE Media Credibility and the Spiral of Silence.
PUB DATE Aug 89
NOTE 37p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (72nd, Washington, DC, August 10-13, 1989).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Conflict Resolution; *Credibility; Critical Thinking; *Decision Making; Factor Analysis; Foreign Countries; Interpersonal Communication; Interviews; *Mass Media Effects; *Mass Media Role; Media Research; *Public Opinion; Social Influences
IDENTIFIERS Foreign News; Media Appraisal; *South Korea

ABSTRACT

The Spiral of Silence theory (Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, 1973) suggests that highly consonant media content has a strong impact upon individuals' perception of the opinion climate as well as upon their opinion expression. Noting that the theory lacks empirical investigation, a study took advantage of a controlled media system in Cheongju, South Korea to examine the theory. Personal interviews of a cross-sectional sample of 287 adults were conducted covering a wide range of topics: interpersonal communication and mass media use, opinions, perceptions of opinion distribution on two social issues, and various demographic questions. Findings suggest that the consonance of media content and the influence of the mass media upon pubic opinion may have a curvilinear relationship. That is, as the degree of perceived consonance of media content increases, the media influence upon an individual's perception increases to a certain degree; however, if the degree of consonance exceeds the limit and if individuals notice a high amount of consonance, the influence of mass media on perception may become minimal again. (Six tables of data are included, and 34 references are attached.) (NH)

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ED308561

MEDIA CREDIBILITY AND THE SPIRAL OF SILENCE

Hye-ryeon Lee

Department of Communication
Stanford University
Stanford, California 94305-2050
Tel: (415) 723-2910

Paper presented at the 1989 convention of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (Communication Theory and Methodology Division) in Washington D.C..

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MEDIA CREDIBILITY AND THE SPIRAL OF SILENCE

Hye-ryeon Lee

Department of Communication
Stanford University
Stanford, California 94305-2050
Tel: (415) 723-2910

ABSTRACT

In the early 1970s, Noelle-Neumann, a German communication researcher, put forward the Spiral of Silence theory regarding the process of public opinion formation and the effect of the mass media upon it (Noelle-Neumann, 1973; 1974). Using data collected in South Korea, this paper further investigates Noelle-Neumann's hypotheses regarding mass media influence on the public opinion process in combination with another factor, media credibility. Taking advantage of the controlled media system in South Korea, we test the prediction that media credibility mediates the impact of the highly consonant media content upon the public opinion process. It was found that media credibility does intervene the influence of the mass media on individuals' perception and opinion expression as predicted, depending on the issue. The data also support the main hypothesis of the spiral of silence theory, that perception that one's opinion is congruent with the opinion distribution in the environment influences willingness to express an opinion in public.

In the early 1970s, Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann forwarded a theory of public opinion she called the Spiral of Silence, based on empirical data collected in West Germany (Noelle-Neumann, 1973; 1974). One of the most important contributions of the spiral of silence theory to the field is the attempt to bring together public opinion research and mass communication research, which have been "disconnected and wandered off on their own" (Katz, 1981). Although the theory has met with considerable scholarly attention, there has been a lack of empirical investigation of the media effect it specifies (Katz, 1981; Taylor, 1982; Glynn & McLeod, 1983,1984,1985; Donsbach & Stevenson, 1984; McLeod, 1984; Neuwirth & Ilundain, 1984; Andreasen & Thompson, 1985; Merton, 1985; Salmon & Kline, 1985; Bergen, 1986; Webb & Wybrow, 1986; Salmon & Neuwirth, 1987; Salmon & Rucinski, 1987).

This paper aims to investigate the spiral of silence theory in a non-western media system with a special focus on the role of the mass media: Would Noelle-Neumann's claim (1973) of powerful mass media hold? Would highly consonant media content have a strong impact upon individuals' perception of the opinion climate as well as upon their opinion expression?

THE SPIRAL OF SILENCE THEORY

Public Opinion as a Process

Noelle-Neumann contends that most people live in perpetual fear of isolating themselves and that, to the individual, not isolating oneself is more important than his/her own judgment (Noelle-Neumann, 1974). This fear of isolation keeps people constantly sensitive to the climate of opinion. If individuals perceive their own view as in the majority or on the rise,

they will express their view in public. But if they perceive their view as in the minority or on the decline, they will withdraw and be silent for fear of isolation. This tendency results in one opinion being heard more frequently and confidently, while the other is expressed less and less. This, in turn, changes the "global" climate of opinion, altering the opinion perception of other persons, and, in turn, affecting their willingness to express opinions. This tendency of one to speak up and the other to be silent starts a "spiraling process," which increasingly establishes one opinion as the prevailing public opinion, thus leading to the "spiral of silence" (Noelle-Neumann, 1974).

Public opinion is, according to Noelle-Neumann, "the dominating opinion which compels compliance of attitude and behavior in that it threatens the dissenting individual with isolation, the politician with loss of popular support" (Noelle-Neumann, 1974). She attempts to analyze and understand development of public opinion as the "interaction of individual views and the supposed view of the environment," approaching public opinion in a process-oriented fashion.

Notion of the Powerful Media

Another important component of the spiral of silence theory, one to which special attention will be given in this paper, is the role of the mass media on the public opinion formation process. Noelle-Neumann states that the media constitute the major source of reference for information about the distribution of opinions in society (Noelle-Neumann, 1973). She argues that laboratory research into the effect of the mass media on opinion formation has led to an underestimation of these effects because the decisive features of the mass media were not considered in traditional

laboratory experiment designs.

Noelle-Neumann identifies three of those features as ubiquity, cumulation and consonance (Noelle-Neumann, 1973). That is, the mass media are found everywhere in the environment of individuals and the same content is repeated in the mass media across time. Moreover, the contents of the mass media tend to be uniform in their description of reality, she says. They may present a potentially distorted distribution of opinions in a society, which affects the individuals' willingness to speak out. As a consequence of these characteristics of the media, the "protective shield" of selective perception in the audience becomes ineffective and the mass media exert a powerful influence upon public opinion formation. Therefore, Noelle-Neumann maintains, the mass media's influence upon society as a whole through the public opinion process deserves reexamination.

A strong criticism of Noelle-Neumann's "return to the concept of powerful media" has come from researchers in the United States (Salmon & Kline, 1985; Glynn & McLeod, 1985). They argue that the mass media in America are pluralistic and media content is not nearly so consonant as Noelle-Neumann claims it is in West Germany. On the other hand, however, Donsbach and Stevenson (1984) argue that there is also a strong consonance of content in the American mass media and that even the "conservative bias" observed by O'Gorman and Garry (1976) could be considered as an example of influence by the mass media.

However, let us think about a situation where a high level of consonance of media content can be assumed, which is the case in most political systems. Would Noelle-Neumann's claim of the powerful mass media hold well?

MEDIA CREDIBILITY

The Setting

South Korea, although generally not viewed as a Third World country, has been no exception in its struggle with the dilemma of development and political democracy. Though the Korean people have never renounced the dream of democracy, political leaders have argued that democracy must be adapted to the realities of the Korean present, and that realities require the president to respond "flexibly" to the needs of the society (Jacobs, 1985). Koreans, they argue, need unity under a strong leader, for only with unity can the people resolutely eliminate waste and corruption, progress and develop. Moreover, governmental control is justified by the threat of invasion from the North. Since the Korean War left the peninsula divided into two parts, the concept of national security has served as a most compelling rationale, providing government leaders with ample room for broad interpretation. As with most other political aspects, the press system in Korea can be characterized as a highly centralized system controlled by the government.[1]

Consonance and Media Credibility

Let us turn to the question, would Noelle-Neumann's claim of the powerful mass media hold in a society where the mass media contents are highly consonant? Would highly consonant media contents have strong impact upon individuals' perception of the opinion climate as well as upon their opinion expression? The answer to these questions may not be very simple.

First of all, Noelle-Neumann's argument of powerful media seems to imply a much too simplistic mass society model where the media are seen as

exerting a powerful influence over atomized individuals (Salmon & Kline, 1985). As pointed out repeatedly, however, individuals do not exist in a social vacuum (Salmon & Kline, 1985; Glynn & McLeod, 1985). Individuals communicate with various groups of people. Individuals are surrounded by various reference groups that may immunize them to the influence of environmental perception and of the mass media (Glynn and McLeod, 1985). More importantly, individuals process information provided by the mass media in a purposeful and active manner.

Therefore, if a political system requires a high degree of control over media content, chances are that (at least some, if not all) members of the society are aware of this control. This awareness will lead individuals to lose trust in the ability of the media to provide unbiased information on important issues. It is our contention that this lack of credibility in media will sensitize individuals to the high degree of consonance in the media content. This lack of media credibility, therefore, will work as a force against the influence of the mass media, reducing the impact of the consonant media content upon the public opinion process.

Credibility, in most research, has been conceptualized primarily as an attribute of the source, reflecting the bias of research toward the source in the communication process (Gunther, 1987).. Recently, however, the reassessment of the sender orientation of communication research in the field has begun. Moreover, it has been found that there is much variance in perceptions of media credibility by topic depending on individuals' opinions (Gunther, 1987). We propose that media credibility should be understood not as an objective property of the source itself, but as a perception of an individual that is topic specific. Therefore, in the

present study, the emphasis is on the perceptions of individuals about both the amount of consonance in media content and the credibility of the media, not on the "actual" amount of consonance or credibility of the media. The relatively high amount of consonance in the contents of the mass media is assumed, for the purpose of later comparison with the perception variables, based on available information on the structure of the mass media system in South Korea and on the relationship of the mass media to the government.[1]

HYPOTHESES

Based on the above discussion about media credibility and consonance, several hypotheses are formulated as follows.

H1: The level of media credibility perceived by an individual is negatively correlated with perceived media consonance.

H2: The level of media credibility perceived by an individual is positively correlated with the individual's opinion congruence with the mass media position on an issue.

H3: The level of media consonance perceived by an individual is negatively correlated with the individual's opinion congruence with the mass media position on an issue.

Based on Noelle-Neumann's original hypotheses (Noelle-Neumann, 1974), two hypotheses are formulated:

H4: Those who perceive their opinion as in the majority are more willing to express their opinion publicly than those who perceive their opinion as in the minority.

H5: Those who expect their opinion to gain support in the future are more willing to express their opinion publicly than those who perceive their opinion as losing support.

Also, based on the articulation function, Noelle-Neumann's (1973) suggestion, that the mass media provide people with words and phrases they can use to defend a point of view, a further hypothesis is formulated:

H6: Those who perceive their opinions as congruent with the mass media

position are more willing to express opinions than those who have incongruent opinions.

In talking about various motivational predictors, some researchers suggest the level of involvement (Salmon and Neuwirth, 1987) and interest (Crane, 1979) are possible motives for expressing opinions. Specifically, individuals are likely to speak out on an issue of greater personal relevance. The positive concept of personal involvement, they argue, rather than the negative concept of fear of isolation may be the mechanism fueling expression (Salmon & Neuwirth, 1987). We will also examine these alternative hypotheses here. Thus,

H7: Perceived issue importance is positively correlated with willingness to express opinions about the issue.

H8: The individual's issue interest is positively correlated with willingness to express opinions about the issue.

METHOD

The Sample

This study is based on a cross-sectional sample of 287 adults in Cheongju, South Korea, in the summer of 1987. The sample was obtained through a multi-stage cluster sampling procedure. Personal interviews were conducted, and interviews covered a wide range of topics dealing with interpersonal communication and mass media use, opinions, perceptions of opinion distribution on two social issues, and various demographic questions.

The mean age of the sample is 33 years, and approximately 50% of respondents fall between the age of 18 and 31. Males constitute 49% of the sample and females 51%. Of the sample, 42% had some college education and another 42% had a high school education. Of the sample, 36% had a monthly

income between KRW 400,000 and 600,000 (U$ 620 and 920), and roughly 86% had a monthly household income between KRW 200,000 and 800,000 (U$ 310 and 1,230).

Because the community in which the survey for this study was conducted is a university town as well as a political center of Chungcheong-Do (Province), the sample is characterized by a somewhat disproportionately high number of higher educated persons and students; 25% of total sample. These structural characteristics should be kept in mind when further generalization of these results to other social systems is attempted.

Issues

Two different issues were used in the study: the industrial complex construction plan and student demonstrations.

The first issue is the government plan to construct an industrial complex in Cheongju area. It involves conflicting values of development versus preservation of the environment. Some advocate the plan because they believe that construction of the industrial complex would stimulate development of the city and bolster growth of the economy in Cheongju area. Others oppose the construction plan for fear of environmental pollution and destruction of the natural beauty of the area. At the time of the survey, the issue created rather intense controversy in Cheongju where the survey was conducted.

The second issue, the student demonstrations, involves two different expectations about the role students should play in society. Some believe that the main task for students is studying and that student demonstrations should not be accepted for any reason. Others insist that students should be the conscience of society and that student demonstrations are acceptable

and necessary. It has been a long-discussed issue among Koreans, and the high intensity of the student demonstrations at the time of the survey made this one of the most salient and controversial issues among Koreans.

Measurement

Variables used in this study were measured as follows:

Issue importance was measured by asking respondents how important the issue was to them personally, on a 5-point scale where 1 was not at all important and 5 was very important.

Issue interest was measured by asking respondents how interested they were in getting more information concerning the issue, on a 5-point scale where 1 was not at all interested and 5 was very much interested.

Personal opinion was determined by asking whether the respondent would strongly oppose, oppose, feel neutral, favor, or strongly favor the issue.

Climate of opinion was assessed at three different levels as Donsbach & Stevenson (1985) suggested -- opinion distribution among primary groups (family and friends), among largely anonymous public (Cheongju residents and Koreans), and finally in the mass media. First, respondents were asked "Among your family [your friends and the people of Cheongju], do you think nearly all favor, majority favor, majority oppose, or nearly all oppose the industrial complex construction plan [the student demonstrations]. Then, respondents were asked, "What about Koreans as a whole?" whether they thought majority favor, about fifty fifty, or majority oppose. Finally, to determine the perceived position of the mass media on the issue, respondents were asked whether they thought the mass media favor, neutral(unbiased), or oppose the issues.

Future trend was measured by asking respondents whether they thought

that, after a year, more people would come to favor the issue, more would come to oppose the issue, or that there would be no change.

Opinion congruence was determined by comparing a respondent's own opinion with the perceived climate of opinions among family, friends, cheongju residents, Koreans, the mass media and future trend.[2]

Media credibility was measured by a series of seven questions. Respondents were asked whether they thought the news media do an excellent, good, fair, poor, or very poor job, concerning the following seven specific goals the media might have; 1)Giving people an accurate daily account of what's happening in the world. 2)Providing citizens impartial and thorough information about politics. 3)Providing a forum for a wide range of viewpoints on important issues. 4)Giving citizens practical information they can use in their daily lives. 5)Serving as a watchdog on government and politicians. 6)Serving as a frank and trustworthy informer for citizens. 7)Providing a service essential to democracy. An index of trust in media was created based on these items. The index produced highly reliable results (internal consistency Alpha=.88). Also, the principal component factor analysis with the items provided additional support for using these measures as an index by producing only one factor (Eigenvalue=4.14, Variance explained=59.2 %).

A series of six items using 5-point Likert scales had been included in the original questionnaire to measure perceived **media consonance.** However, the factor analysis of those six items revealed three disparate dimensions.[3] Therefore, these three factors will be treated as three separate concepts. Factor scores of the three factors will be used for three media consonance concepts in subsequent data analyses.

Two items ("Newscasts on different radio stations tend to be pretty much the same" and "The major news stories are the same on all the television stations.") loaded on the first factor. The factor represents consonance in electronic media content.

The second factor consists of two items ("Some television stations are better than others at giving viewers an idea of what the public is thinking on important issues" and "Newscasts on some radio stations are more thorough than others in covering all sides of an issue."). This factor is named as consonance in electronic media completeness.

The third factor represents the concept, consonance in newspapers, and consists of two items ("It does not make much difference which daily newspaper you read for news because they are all pretty much the same" and "Some newspapers are better than others at giving readers different points of view.").

Inter-item correlations within each of the three factors range from .27 to .53 (all of them significant at $p<.001$ level). None of the inter-correlations between these three factors was significant, supporting the treatment of them as three different concepts instead one.

The dependent variable, **willingness to express opinion**, was measured in three different situations: in the presence of a primary group (family and relatives); in the presence of neighbors; and in the presence of strangers. Respondents were asked, "Assume that you were with your family and relatives, and somebody brought up this topic. If one of them adamantly express an opinion opposite to yours, would you like to speak up and express your opinion to the person?" Next, to assess willingness to express opinion among neighbors, respondents were asked, "Assume that you

were in a monthly neighborhood gathering and somebody brought up this topic. If one of your neighbors adamantly expresses an opinion opposite to yours, would you like to speak up and express your opinion?" Finally, to assess willingness to express opinion among strangers, Noelle-Neumann's train situation was adopted. Respondents were asked, "Assume that you were on a train and came to talk with other passengers who sat in front and next to you. If somebody brought up this topic and one of the passengers adamantly expresses an opinion opposite to yours, would you speak up and express your opinion to the person?"

RESULTS

There is substantially more support than opposition on both issues: 39% support vs. 20% opposition for the industrial complex construction plan, and 46% support vs. 12% opposition for student demonstrations.

Cheongju citizens' mean score for media credibility index was 2.53. This reflects slightly negative evaluation of the media. Table 1 provides Pearson correlation coefficients among variables.

Table 1 about here

Gender, age and education are highly correlated with the level of trust in the media; less educated, older females tend to perceive the mass media as credible. Younger, well educated, higher income respondents perceive greater consonance in electronic media content. Younger, wealthier, males tend to perceive more consonance in electronic media completeness. Consonance in newspapers, however, is negatively correlated with both

gender and income. Lower income females tend to perceive higher consonance in newspapers. Media credibility is negatively correlated with two electronic media consonance factors as predicted in H1. However, it is significantly and positively related to the newspaper consonance factor.

Table 2 about here

For the industrial complex issue, perception of high degree of consonance in newspapers is associated with higher opinion congruence with media position on the issue (Table 2). In the case of the student demonstration issue, trust in the media is very strongly associated with opinion congruence with the perceived media position, as predicted in H2. Also, perception of consonance in electronic media content is associated with low opinion congruence with the media position as predicted in H3.

Hierarchical regression analyses were conducted to assess the relative impact of each set of variables on opinion congruence with the media position on issues (Table 3). Demograhics and media use variables were entered earlier in the regression model as controls. Four demographic variables: education; gender; income; age, were entered as a first block. Four media use variables: news viewing pattern (Do you have a regular television news program that you usually watch or do you watch the news on different channels?); frequency of television news viewing; number of newspapers regularly read; frequency of newspaper reading, were entered as a second block. Then, three media consonance factors were entered as a third block followed by media credibility as a fourth block.

Table 3 about here

For the industrial complex issue, the media use block shows a significant R^2 change of 3.3% ($p<.05$). The perceived consonance of newspapers emerges as a significant predictor for one's opinion congruence with the media position on the issue. On the other hand, in the case of the student demonstration issue, media credibility emerges as a highly significant predictor for opinion congruence with the media position (R^2 change=4.8%, $p<.001$).

Now, turning to the test of main hypotheses of the spiral of silence theory, Pearson correlations seem to provide some support for H4 (Table 4).

Table 4 about here

Perceived opinion congruence with family, friends, and Cheongju residents are associated with willingness to express one's opinion in the three settings. So are issue importance and issue interest. However, expected future trend is not associated with opinion expression at all. Opinion congruence with the media position is not associated with opinion expression in the case of the industrial complex issue. Opinion congruence with the media, however, is fairly strongly, but <u>negatively</u>, associated with willingness to express opinion in all three settings, contrary to expectation.

Noting that demographic variables are strongly correlated with the dependent variable, multivariate analyses using hierarchical regression

were conducted to assess the relative impact of opinion congruence variables on willingness to express opinion (Table 5 and Table 6). Four demographic variables and two personality variables[4] were used as controls and entered as first and second blocks. Media credibility and consonance factors were entered in the regression as a third block. Issue importance and interest were entered as a fourth block and opinion congruence variables as the final block.

Table 5 and Table 6 about here

Simultaneously controlling for other variables, congruence variables as a block emerge as a significant predictor for the willingness to express opinion about the industrial complex issue in the neighborhood and the train settings. On the other hand, in the case of the student demonstrations issue, those variables served as a predictor for opinion expression in the neighborhood setting only. In the case of the industrial complex issue, perceived opinion congruence among family members played a significant role in explaining opinion expression in the neighborhood and the train settings. Also, perceived opinion congruence among Koreans as a whole was a significant but negative predictor for opinion expression in the train setting (beta=-.153, $p<.05$). None of the individual congruence variables reached statistical significance in the case of the student demonstrations issue.

Education emerges as a consistently significant predictor for willingness to express opinion in public, regardless of difference of both settings and issues. In the case of the industrial complex issue, age and

gender of the respondent contributed to willingness to express opinion.

Issue interest emerges as a highly significant predictor for willingness to express opinion about the industrial complex issue regardless of settings. However, in case of the student demonstration issue, neither issue interest nor issue importance emerged as a significant predictor. Issue salience as a block accounts for significant but small amount of variance in the family/relatives measure (R2 change=.033, $p<.01$) and the neighborhood setting (R2 change=.026, $p<.05$).

Media credibility emerges as a significant predictor for the willingness to express opinion on the industrial complex issue in the train setting. Perceived consonance in electronic media completeness is a significant predictor for opinion expression on both issues in the train setting.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The results of hierarchical regression in Table 5 and Table 6 seem to provide at least some support for the main hypothesis of the spiral of silence theory. That is, individuals' perceptions of opinion congruence with various groups of people in the environment do affect the willingness to express one's opinion to others after controlling for other variables.

The lack of significant influence of opinion congruence variables on willingness to express opinion to family and relatives on both issues suggest that the perception of opinion congruence may be important in expressing opinion to more distant others, but may not be so in the case of closer people. Being close, individuals may feel comfortable in expressing opinions to their family members and relatives, regardless of their

perceptions of others' opinions. The lack of influence of perceived opinion congruence upon the degree of willingness to express oneself in the train setting may due to the nature of the student demonstrations issue. Knowing the anti-government nature of the issue, it is not the perceptions of what others think, but more realistic concerns about one's personal safety that could affect opinion expression.

Perceived opinion congruence with family emerged as a significant predictor for expressing opinion on the industrial complex issue in the neighborhood and train settings. This may mean that individuals care more about opinion congruence with people close to them. If they perceive support among their family members, they are more willing to express opinion to more distant others regardless of those "outside" opinions. This seems to point to the necessity to take the role of reference groups into consideration in the spiraling process, as suggested by Glynn & McLeod (1985). After all, it may not be the amorphous "public opinion" that matters to individuals. Rather, support from a closer reference group is all they need to have confidence in their opinions and express them in public.

It is of interest to note that the issue salience block emerged as consistently influential on willingness to express opinion. These findings seem to support the claim (Crane, 1979; Salmon & Neuwirth, 1987) that the level of issue involvement or issue interest might be an important motive for expressing opinions. The notion of issue salience, especially issue interest, seems to warrant further investigation along with the fear of isolation as an incentive for not expressing opinions.

The perception of consonance in newspapers seems to work quite

differently from consonance in the electronic media. The less trust an individual has in the media, the higher degree of consonance s/he perceives in contents of the electronic media. However, for newspapers, the direction is reversed. One possible explanation for this may be the persistence of the traditional image of newspapers among Koreans as fighters against an unfair government, established during the Japanese ruling period.

The different patterns of relationship between many, especially media, variables produced by two issues seem to be worth noting. For the student demonstrations issue, the less trust an individual has in the media and the more consonance an individual perceives in the electronic media, the less the congruence between own opinion and media position on the issue. The more congruence an individual perceives between own opinion and the media position, the less willing s/he is to express opinion to neighbors as well as to strangers in the train. However, this was not the case for the industrial complex issue. The more consonance an individual perceives in newspaper, the more consonance exists between own opinion and the media position on the industrial complex issue.

Hierarchical regression analyses also revealed quite different pattern across the two issues. Media credibility was the strongest predictor of opinion congruence with the media on the student demonstrations issue. On the other hand, media use was the strongest predictor in the case of the industrial complex issue.

The above findings suggest that in the case of the student demonstrations issue, high perceived consonance does not influence public opinion, contrary to Noelle-Neumann's contention but consistent with ours.

However, for the industrial complex issue, the findings seem to support Noelle-Neumann's claim: high media use predicts high opinion congruence with the media position on that issue.

A possible explanation for this finding may be found in the distinctive characteristics of the two issues used. The student demonstration issue is so blatantly anti-governmental in its nature that anyone aware of the monopoly of the media system by the government shall become suspicious of the accuracy of the information provided. Moreover, at the time when the data were collected, the student demonstrations issue was visible to virtually everyone in the country. However, in the case of the industrial complex issue, which is more neutral and without an obvious reason to doubt press accuracy, people are more likely to accept the information provided by the mass media.

These findings suggest that the consonance of media content and the influence of the mass media upon public opinion do not have a linear relationship. Instead, it may be a curvilinear relationship. That is, as the degree of perceived consonance of media content increases, the media influence upon an individual's perception increases to a certain degree. But, if the degree of consonance exceeds the limit and if individuals notice a high amount of consonance, the influence of mass media on perception may become minimal again. The level of perceived media credibility may work as a contingent variable in the process. Implications of this are that individuals may not be so naive as to trust the contents of media blindly, but, at the same time, they are not free from the influence of the mass media to a certain point, either.

Though Noelle-Neumann's work suggested a possible linkage between

public opinion research and mass communication research which have been disconnected, there has been not much effort to investigate her hypotheses regarding the role of the mass media on the public opinion process. The findings in the present study provide some insight into the role of the mass media on the public opinion process and raise some questions. But, the findings are not complete by any means. Further research seems warranted for more concrete evidence on the questions raised here and for deeper insight about the point where individuals start to recognize the consonance of the media and through what kind of mechanism they are able to detect the degree of consonance in media contents, how they resist the influence of those consonant contents, and at which point the influence of media starts decreasing.

NOTES

1. The structure of the mass media in Korea can be characterized as a highly centralized system under the tight control of the government. This governmental control is justified internally by societal concerns with the threat of invasion from the North. Since the Korean War left the peninsula divided into two parts, the concept of national security has become most important, providing government leaders with ample room for broad interpretation.

In November 1980, the government initiated the Press Amalgamation Plan, seeking a fundamental restructuring of the media. Under the plan, existing six news service were merged into one, Yonhap News Agency. Two privately owned broadcasting companies -- Tongyang Broadcasting Corp and Donga Radio Station -- were absorbed by the government owned Korea Broadcasting System (KBS). Munhwa Broadcasting Corp.(MBC) was required to sell 65% of its shares to KBS. Christian Broadcasting System, which had strongly criticized government policy in its radio news broadcasts, was forced to confine its coverage to religious news only. Individual ownership of the electronic media was forbidden. Newspapers were not allowed to base correspondents in provincial cities, leaving Yonhap as the sole source of provincial news (Lee, 1982).

While the Press Amalgamation Plan restructured the media, the press as a whole has come under increased government influence through the enactment of a new Basic Press Law in January, 1981. The Basic Press Law, which specifically deals with the rights and restrictions of the press, imposes 'press responsibility' as a legal requirement and limits access to the

press industry. Under the law, all publications including newspapers, and periodicals should register with the government through the Ministry of Culture and Information. The Publicity Coordination Office in the Ministry of Culture and Information coordinates government information to the press and monitors the performance of press organizations. Broadcasting networks are supervised by the Broadcasting Commission, which consists of nine members appointed by the president. The law also allows the Minister of Culture and Information to shut down newspapers if they encourage or praise violence or other illegal acts disturbing public order. The law provides provisions for reporters' access to information source and for journalists' privilege of confidentiality. These provisions have been used to restrict the mass media's coverage of news that might have a detrimental effect on government image (Lee, 1982). No formal censorship existed at the time of this study, but the government handed to the press the "Guidelines for Voluntary Cooperation on Reporting," which specifies how to report important matters, e.g., portrayal of the government, or the nation's economy (Youm, 1986).

Though freedom of the press is guaranteed constitutionally, the Basic Press Law, other penal laws like National Security Acts, and the Martial Law provide the government with ample room and with legitimate means to suppress freedom of the press (Youm, 1986). Thus, the press system in Korea remains highly centralized under tight control of the government with the purpose of ensuring national security and stability.

2. If a respondent favored the issue and perceived a majority of the public [mass media] favored it too, high opinion congruence exists. If a respondent opposed the issue and perceived a majority of the public opposed it too, another high opinion congruence exists. If a respondent felt neutral about the issue and thought a majority of the public felt neutral too, high opinion congruence exists. If a respondent either favored or opposed the issue and perceived the majority of the public felt neutral about the issue, moderate opinion congruence exists. If a respondent felt neutral and perceived the public either favored or opposed the issue, moderate opinion congruence exists. If a respondent favored the issue and perceived a majority of the public opposed it, low opinion congruence exists. If a respondent opposed the issue and thought a majority of the public favored it, low opinion congruence exists.

3. (Principal component) Factor analysis of six media consonance measures:

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
I. Electronic media: Content			
Newscasts on different radio stations tend to be pretty much the same.	.88	.10	-.19
The major news stories are the same on all the television stations.	.83	.06	.20
II. Electronic media: Completeness			
Some television stations are better than others at giving viewers an idea of what the public is thinking on important issues.	.00	.86	.14
Newscasts on some radio stations are more thorough than others in covering all sides of an issue.	.16	.82	-.16
III. Newspapers			
Some newspapers are better than others at giving readers different points of view.	-.15	.16	.88
It does not make much difference which daily newspaper you read for news because they are all pretty much the same.	.35	-.35	.65
Variances explained	28.9%	25.7%	20.8%
Eigenvalues	1.73	1.54	1.25

Factor loadings based on a varimax rotation.

4. Personality traits were measured by the self-esteem index developed by Rosenberg (1960). Factor analysis of the items resulted in two factors, which were named as self-confidence and self-regret respectively.

(Principal component) Factor analysis of the self-esteem index:

	Factor 1	Factor 2
I. Self-confidence		
I feel that I have a number of good qualities.	.59	-.20
All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.	.62	.34
I am able to do things as well as most other people.	.78	.03
I feel I do not have much to be proud of.	.68	.08
I take a positive attitude toward myself.	.79	.05
On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.	.69	.24
I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal basis with others.	.80	-.09
II. Self-regret		
I wish I could have more respect for myself	-.18	.80
I certainly feel useless at times.	.45	.54
Variances explained	42.5%	12.2%
Eigenvalue	3.83	1.10

Factor loadings based on Varimax rotation.

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TABLE 1

Pearson Correlations between Demographics, Media Credibility and Media Consonance Factors

	Age	Gender(F)	Income	Education	Media Credibility
Media Credibility	.29***	.14**	-.07	-.11*	(1.00)
Media Consonance					
1.Electronic Media; Sameness	-.24***	.09	.17**	.29***	-.12*
2.Electronic Media; Lack of Diversity	-.13*	-.28***	.15**	.09	-.39**
3.Newspapers	-.01	.18***	-.12*	.03	.14*

* p<.05
** p<.01
***p<.001

TABLE 2

Opinion Congruence with Media Position, by Media Credibility and Consonance Factors Pearson Correlations

	Opinion Congruence with Media Position on	
	Industrial Complex	Student Demonstrations
Media Credibility	.03	.22***
Media Consonance		
1.Electronic Media: Content	-.04	-.12*
2.Electronic Media: Completeness	.08	.02
3.Newspapers	.11*	.06

* p<.05
** p<.01
***p<.001

TABLE 3

Predictors of Perceived Opinion Congruence with Media Position on Issues

	Opinion Congruence with Media Position on Industrial Complex		Opinion Congruence with Media Position on Student Demonstrations	
	Beta	(R^2 ch)	Beta	(R^2 ch)
Demographics				
Education	.122		-.014	
Gender(F)	-.126		-.131	
Income	.022		.077	
Age	.097		.033	
		(.021)		(.026)
Media Use				
News Viewing Pattern+	-.014		-.139*	
TV news viewing	.079		.080	
No. of newspapers	-.074		-.049	
Newspaper reading	-.151		.025	
		(.033)*		(.026)
Media Consonance				
Newspapers	.154*		.114	
Electronic media: Content	-.024		-.101	
Electronic media: Completeness	.062		.093	
		(.015)		(.018)
Media Credibility	.039		.264**	
		(.001)		(.048)**
Standard R^2		.070**		.118***
Adjusted R^2		.029*		.079**

* p<.05
** p<.01
***p<.001

\+ Coded 1 if respondent watchs news on one station all the time,
2 if respondent watchs news on different channels.

Entries are standard beta scores.
Parenthetical entries indicate incremental variance for each block.

TABLE 4

Pearson Correlations between Willingness to Express Opinions and major independent variables

	Willingness to Express Opinion to					
	Family/Relatives		Neighbors		Stranger(Train)	
	IndCom	StuDem	IndCom	StuDem	IndCom	StuDem
Opinion Congruence with						
Family	.13*	.17**	.23**	.17**	.20**	.10
Friends	.08	.26**	.13*	.24**	.19**	.21**
Cheongju residents	.05	.14**	.12*	.15**	.10*	.13*
Koreans	-.12*	-.06	-.01	-.03	-.11*	.01
Future Trend	-.04	.06	-.01	.05	-.04	.04
Media Position	-.04	-.19**	.00	-.18**	-.00	-.12*
Issue Importance	.21**	.29**	.21**	.23**	.15*	.23**
Issue Interest	.30**	.31**	.35**	.25**	.27**	.25**
Demographics						
Gender(F)	-.17**	-.06	-.15**	-.05	-.24**	-.18**
Age	-.24**	-.32**	-.29**	-.20**	-.22**	-.29**
Education	.32**	.42**	.37**	.29**	.38**	.38**
Income	.11*	.16**	.06	.12*	.14**	.17**

* p<.05
** p<.01

TABLE 5

Predictors of Willingness to Express Opinion On the Industrial Complex Issue

	Willingness to Express Opinion to Fam/Rel		Neighbor		Stranger(Train)	
	Beta	(R^2 ch)	Beta	(R^2 ch)	Beta	(R^2 ch)
Demographics						
Education	.181**		.229***		.238***	
Gender(F)	-.119		-.080		-.183**	
Income	.026		-.038		.032	
Age	-.156*		-.152*		-.117	
		(.137)***		(.170)***		(.190)***
Personality						
Self-Confidence	.046		.040		.024	
Self-Regret	-.084		-.057		-.079	
		(.009)		(.005)		(.011)
Issue Salience						
Involvement	.097		.063		.011	
Interest	.183**		.257***		.197**	
		(.065)***		(.082)***		(.036)***
Media						
Credibility	.089		.035		.153*	
Consonance						
Elec:Content	-.025		-.004		-.040	
Elec:Completeness	.044		.061		.146*	
Newspapers	-.083		-.093		-.084	
		(.012)		(.006)		(.024)
Congruence						
Family	.129		.232***		.166*	
Friends	-.056		-.114		.067	
Cheongju residents	.032		.043		.009	
Koreans	-.129		-.029		-.153*	
Media	.000		-.020		.007	
Future Trend	.067		.086		.047	
		(.022)		(.043)*		(.047)**
Standard R^2		.245***		.307***		.308***
Adjusted R^2		.194***		.260***		.262***

* p<.05
** p<.01
***p<.001

Entries are standard beta scores.
Parenthetical entries indicate incremental variance for each block.

TABLE 6

Predictors of Willingness to Express Opinion On the Student Demonstration Issue

	Willingess to Express Opinion to Fam/Rel		Neighbor		Stranger(Train)	
	Beta	(R^2 ch)	Beta	(R^2 ch)	Beta	(R^2 ch)
Demographics						
Education	.261***		.185*		.205**	
Gender(F)	-.034		-.000		-.106	
Income	.049		.036		.058	
Age	-.106		-.030		-.119	
		(.196)***		(.090)***		(.192)***
Personality						
Self-Confidence	.036		.050		.135*	
Self-Regret	-.013		.024		-.009	
		(.012)		(.010)		(.021)
Issue Salience						
Involvement	.086		.038		.017	
Interest	.087		.081		.072	
		(.033)**		(.026)*		(.011)
Media						
Credibility	.043		.027		.060	
Elec:Content	.030		-.044		-.042	
Elec:Completeness	.015		.039		.141*	
Newspapers	-.066		-.113		-.046	
		(.007)		(.012)		(.013)
Congruence						
Family	.094		.099		.045	
Friends	.100		.114		.064	
Cheongju residents	-.010		.018		.017	
Koreans	-.079		-.045		-.025	
Media	-.094		-.131		-.088	
Future Trend	-.017		-.007		-.026	
		(.033)		(.044)*		(.015)
Standard R^2		.281***		.182***		.252***
Adjusted R^2		.233***		.127***		.201***

* p<.05
** p<.01
***p<.001

Entries are standard beta scores.
Parenthetical entries indicate incremental variance for each block.